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‘Street citizenship’: informal processes of engaging as citizens through research and knowledge exchange in three African cities

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Abstract

Street-living youth are deprived of formal citizenship due to their age and exclusion from school or other state apparatus through which cultural/moral values are shared. Drawing on participatory longitudinal data from research in three African cities, this paper explores a nuanced ‘street citizenship’ as facilitated through informal processes and spaces, suggesting ‘street citizenship’ can be active and sometimes activist, with the potential to challenge understandings of poverty and marginalisation in childhood more widely. Street-living youth’s lived citizenship practices are developed at various scales within communities, cities and states and through engagement with local communities, civil society, policymakers and governments.

Keywords: Citizenship; Street youth; African cities, Knowledge exchange

Introduction

Citizenship, a concept debated and contested across the social sciences, has in recent years attracted some attention in the area of childhood and youth studies. Following Skelton's (2010) call for their greater inclusion in political geography debates, young people must be recognised as active agents, who are capable *political* decision-makers – involved in the everyday stuff of life (Häkli, and Kallio, 2014; Kallio and Häkli, 2013; Kallio and Mitchell 2016; Philo and Smith, 2003). This builds on decades of research highlighting the importance of young people's participation in both research and society, framed by the sociology of childhood and supported, to some extent, by a children's rights agenda. Yet, the notion of citizenship remains a shifting and malleable concept, challenging to contend with and understood and instrumentalised differently by citizens and state. For younger people, status as full-citizens with full participation in society and the apparatus of socio-political decision-making is not possible because of policies that separate children and adults by aged boundaries. This has raised interesting debates about the position of young people in society as included or excluded, as 'beings' or as 'becomings' (Uprichard, 2008) and the construction of children as "not-yet-citizens" (Moosa-Mitha, 2005: 369).

It is important to distinguish between young people's human and citizenship rights. While human rights have since 1948 (and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights), been recognised as both universal and international, with roots going back to the Enlightenment (Sjoberg, *et al.* 2001); citizenship is partially bound up in nationality; comprising of rights (and obligations), political participation and enfranchisement (Cohen, 1999; Basok, *et al.* 2006). National borders are subject to change, and international migration driven by conflict and persecution has caused a "partial disaggregation of state sovereignty" (Cohen, 1999: 245). The transnational movements of people emphasise that while citizens have citizenship rights, in defining citizenship one defines the non-universal, a belonging which is inclusive or exclusive because of legal status (Moosa-Mitha, 2005).

However, those excluded from citizenship are not only those born outwith the state, but also those within it, the not-yet-citizen: "Children who hold the legal status of citizens of their country of residence by virtue of birth are, for instance, entitled to one right symbolic of citizenship – the passport – but not to another – the vote" (Lister, 2007: 695). These "second-class 'insiders'" face a "temporal restriction" (Ibid: 696) on their citizenship; others are excluded from it because they belong to minorities not recognised by the state, not "treated as citizens" while considering themselves to be so (Ibid: 695). The state therefore has at its disposal the material forms of citizenship exclusion or endowment: passports and other identity documents.

This paper will consider citizenship from the perspective of a particular group of not-yet-citizens; young people who live on the streets. The term 'street youth' here refers to young people who live and work informally in city spaces. They are not a homogenous group, and daily life varies between groups, cities and countries; but they generally use the city for survival. They are marginalised due to poverty, lack family proximity, and develop strong relations with peers and other urban actors. They are mobile within urban environments, making use of both formal and informal spaces. 'Street youth' is used here to distinguish a

group, who, by virtue of their age and marginalisation, are deprived of national citizenship: unable to access the state apparatus of citizenship or formal educational structures through which the cultural or moral values of citizenship are shared. The paper examines citizenship education and its role, if any, in developing citizenship and goes on to explore the emergence of street youth's alternative lived 'street citizenship' through involvement in a longitudinal research and knowledge exchange project.

Citizenship education – a "geopolitical practice"?

If young people are understood to be 'becoming' rather than extant full-citizens (which is arguably how they are perceived by governments), citizenship can be framed as a journey via a governmentally-determined learning process. Citizenship education, where young people are seen to 'learn to be citizens' through formal structures in schools, and civil society organisations was an initiative by governments seeking to create a relational form of citizenship where (young) citizens would develop ethics of mutual responsibility and respect. Through education, the emphasis would shift from citizenship rights to obligations, with a stronger focus on shared values, and an emphasis on active citizenship through volunteering. This may be "moulding the behaviours of citizens" (Staeheli 2018: 61) enabling stronger governance but education also is a key plank of the cohesive substance of government and society (Kallio and Mitchell 2016). Citizens are actors (rather than passive recipients) in the process of understanding and enacting citizenship by participation in education and other institutions of state and social care. It is understandable in this context that states seek to educate their citizens explicitly in citizenship. However, the desire by states to instrumentalise the legal and moral status of citizenship through imposing pedagogies has potentially sinister implications (Basok and Ilcan 2006; Staeheli 2018).

The notion that there is a 'correct' form of citizen has emerged globally. In the UK, compulsory citizenship education was introduced to secondary schools in 2002, and similar education programmes were established in other countries, as a product of a post-UNCRC global discourse around childhood (Staeheli 2018; Staeheli *et al.,* 2013; Skelton, 2010). The premise that citizenship can be pedagogically instructed and received thereby overtaking the agentic power of young people to assert and define their own citizenship practices and engagement, has however, been substantially critiqued (Hart, 2009; Mills, 2013; Pykett, 2009; Staeheli *et al.*, 2013).

Citizenship education can be seen as a "geopolitical practice" intended to instil democratic civil society in countries perceived as both valuable and vulnerable democratic allies (see Nagel and Staeheli, 2015, on Jordan). The presentation of citizenship through education to a generation in school is potentially reductive of citizenship; rendering child citizens as subjects (Sim 2011). In post-colonial Africa, youth emerged as the rebellious leaders of change, the driving force behind democracy across the continent. Subsequent economic crises and neoliberal reforms has seen youth activism again become the loci of political struggle (Bayat 2017; Fredericks 2014). Buire and Staeheli (2017) also discuss how active citizenship, in the South African context, can also produce such activism by empowering marginalised groups to take charge. Here, activists *use* the tools of active citizenship to disrupt and challenge political consensus

and to facilitate radical change. This is not surprising given young people represent 60% of the population in the African continent (UN DESA, 2015) and their economic activities are characterised by precarity and low productivity (Langevang *et al.* 2015). Youth are frequently excluded from education and employment; marginalised and out of place in a position of 'waiting' with their status as citizens increasingly questioned (Honwana 2012; 2013). Here, citizenship education has been seen as a means of re-integrating former young activists within post-conflict or post-rebellion states (Diouf, 2013). Outwith Europe, the contextualisation of citizenship can be directly opposed to indigenous understandings of democracy and societal frameworks (Quaynor, 2015; Kubow, 2007).

In Asia, for example, youth expressed geopolitical agency in situations of contested citizenship and belonging and resisted the notion of citizenship as subjective and passive (Kallio 2020). In Hong Kong, recent political resistance to mainland China includes "geosocial" resistance (Ibid: 2) where youth engage in localised community activities that are both embedded in and reclaim the city-state space (Lam-Knott 2019). Co-creating an alternative "sociocultural space" in the city is a presentation of active resistance against imposed citizenship.

Given demographic, economic and moral obligations to involve young people as 'citizens' of their nations and the world, this paper seeks to explore young people's informal and formal 'citizenships' and the role that citizenship education can play, particularly where children and youth are positioned outside of the societal and state structures and unable to access their rights. Street children and youth (which include those technically adults, and therefore not constrained by enfranchisement age-bars) are one group who are excluded from full-citizenship and citizenship processes though their status as 'out of place', and consistently unable to access their rights. Yet, as this paper will show, it is in informal spaces where street youth demonstrate citizenship in subtle and nuanced ways that is both local and global, transcending normal boundaries of nation-state to develop their own form of 'street citizenship'.

In the following sections, the paper positions street-living young people as marginalised in discussions of citizenship, and critically engages with the literature on the concept of lived citizenship as an alternative form of citizenship. The research and knowledge exchange process which emerged as an informal site of citizenship learning is then discussed. Drawing on interview data, the paper explores the idea of 'street citizenship' as both a local and global form of citizenship that transcends nation-states, disrupting notions of youth as active citizens towards an adapted form of what Staeheli *et al.* (2013) term activist citizenship.

Street youth as excluded citizens?

In 2012, the United Nations OHCHR Resolution 16/12 (UNOHCHR, 2012) was the first policy discussion on street young people's rights for over 20 years. This was important because street young people had fallen through the policy net. In the 1990s the commitment of African states to the principles of children's rights was witnessed by the widespread ratification of international standards such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC; 1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1990, and subsequent national legislation across African countries. Nonetheless, Mulinge (2002) points out, the political will

to implement laws is often hampered by difficult socioeconomic and political contexts, lack of resources and state unwillingness to challenge embedded social norms. Additionally, most African national children's rights legislation, modelled on the CRC, followed western conceptualisations of childhood which prioritise protection of childhood innocence and placed children within family contexts.

Street children, who often fell outside this 'ideal' childhood, were considered 'out of place' on the streets, unable to access their rights, and generally missing from legislation (one notable exception being the South African Children Act (Amended) 2005). This means they do not exist as citizens in policy: often they have no birth registration or formal identity documents. They are generally located outside systems of education and family life: the sites of citizenship learning (van Blerk, 2014). Further, positioned as marginalised and out of place (Ennew and Swart-Kruger, 2003), they face discrimination and removal from the spaces of their street/community engagement (van Blerk, 2013). They have fallen though the policy gap for two reasons. First, their lack of formal representation as a group places them outside the arena of policy development. They are difficult to define, both in terms of their relationship to the street and their status as both victims and perpetrators of crime; their complexity being key to their elusiveness. Second, their independent status places them outside the realms of child protection legislation which places young people under 18 years under adults' care (Poretti *et al.*. 2014; van Blerk 2014). Therefore, although street children and youth emerged as one of the first visible faces of child poverty, 30 years later they still suffer from violations of their citizenship rights (Thomas de Benitez, 2007).

The status of street young people as marginalised echoes the exclusion of others from citizenship rights. In order to explore the ways in which street youth may be considered as citizens the following section engages with different models of lived citizenship practice for more accurately situating street youth within such debates.

Lived citizenship: an alternative to formal citizenship education

The positioning of youth as excluded from citizenship, and debates on the inclusion and exclusion of citizenship more generally, has been critiqued in one of two ways. Youth are either seen as excluded and attempts are made to make youth more *included* (Wearing, 2011), for example through education; or that citizenship requires a radical re-theorising to ensure youth are positioned correctly. The former position takes a classic liberal view of citizenship where youth are instructed to play an active role in the workforce and ultimately through this an active role in civic life (Mansouri and Mikola, 2014). For many young people, this position is increasingly difficult to access (Honwana, 2012, 2013). More often groups such as migrants, refugees, and those living in poverty are notionally *excluded* from the formal workforce and state citizenship.

Young people's political engagement then may take the form of protest and other transformative acts of lived citizenship creating new sites of struggle (Buire and Staeheli, 2017). Schwiertz (2016), drawing on work with undocumented migrants in Australia, suggests that this can lead to positive and negative citizenship. 'Positive' citizenship relates to

integrating a particular group through highlighting their similarities to citizens, while 'negative' citizenship emerges from a group claiming rights because they are discriminated against. These perspectives still separate youth as different, rather than "'differently equal' members of the public culture in which they are full participants" (Moosa-Mitha, 2005: 369).

Therefore it is important to move beyond the inclusion/exclusion dichotomy focusing rather on citizenship as encompassing the socio-political aspects of daily life. Feminist perspectives that position citizenship to be about inclusion in society are helpful here. Lister (1997) highlights inclusion and exclusion, not as opposites but as two components of a citizenship continuum although inclusion is the more commonly associated with the notion of belonging to a nation-state. More evidence of the exclusivity of citizenship has emerged. Hammett (2008) discusses this in terms of entitlement or un-entitlement to citizenship in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. A continuum of citizenship suggests rather than a dichotomy of excluded versus included, many groups have access to different aspects of meaningful participation and therefore 'some' citizenship (Lister, 1997). This relates well to a softening of the traditional models of youth citizenship (Philo and Smith, 2003; Skelton, 2010) where young people may be accepted into full adult citizenship through policy and education in a staged process and confined to specific spaces en route towards this point: schools; 'children-friendly' environments etc., as they are granted more autonomy as they age (Staeheli *et al.*. 2013).

Yet, as Buire and Staeheli (2017) highlight this active process of citizenship education can also facilitate youth to go beyond expectations and engage in more disruptive politics. This challenges a continuum of access to formal citizenship where youth transcend active citizenship for radical purposes. For street youth the continuum of accessing formal citizenship is even less applicable; they are unable to access spaces where citizenship is 'learnt' or display citizenship in formal city spaces. A decoupling of citizenship from state is required, so that a more open conceptualisation of lived citizenship can be achieved (Boudreau *et al.*, 2015).

In this context, it is more appropriate to focus on lived citizenship for understanding how street youth engage in citizenship acts. Moving beyond active citizenship as a formal practice, lived citizenship emphasises the nuanced social and spatial practices of citizenship in everyday life, at various scales. Rather than focusing on national citizen-making; lived citizenship celebrates the ways citizenship is understood in and through everyday practices (Warming and Fahnoe (2017). For marginalised groups, where formal citizenship engagement is precarious due to constraints on their ability to act as citizens (including age, illness, impairment, discrimination, economic and educational status); lived citizenship enables understanding of the nuanced ways citizenship practices can change and challenge politics (Buire and Staeheli (2017). This is achieved at various spatial scales, within formal and informal spaces and can transcend normative boundaries of nation states (Kallio et al 2015).

While 'out of place' in formal spaces and structures, youth generate fluid forms of belonging, producing citizenship through diverse practices within their own informal spaces (Isin 2008). Häkli and Kallio discuss citizenship as a tool of political agency and develop the concept of topography as "conventional" understandings of space which can be mapped and measured; and topology the social relations taking place within, and shaping, space (2014: 189). While

the political space, such as the settings of education, health and voter enfranchisement may be carved up topographically along (invisible) socio-political boundaries; the topological domain occupies varied spaces which young people simultaneously abide in and create. Through acts of citizenship, the topography and topology of lived citizenship is enmeshed in the lived realities of young people rather than institutionally bounded (Kallio et al 2015). Street youth are excluded from the physical apparatus of citizenship and the topology of formal enfranchised society; their engagement in citizenship occurs within topographically uncharted informal physical settings.

Therefore, by decoupling 'citizen' from 'state actor', a culturally inclusive model of lived citizenship is created based on the empowerment of citizens through engagement in active democratic spaces where their voices can be heard. Fredericks (2014) highlights this among Senegalese youth, who used music to create radical political critique and through occupation of uncensored, active democratic spaces had tangible political impact. Such lived citizenships are fostered by inclusionary acts by individuals within and for communities, through what Kabeer (2005) terms inclusionary citizenship from below. Ugor (2013) provides an illustrative example, where youth in the Niger Delta, living beside state-controlled refineries in poverty-stricken communities who saw none of the economic benefits of oil extraction, developed an alternative oil industry to serve their communities. By subverting both government and global oil corporations, youth saw themselves as undertaking patriotic acts. Ugor (2013) terms this subversive strategy of resource reclamation "insurgent" citizenship: a disenfranchised generation actively engaging in taking control of their own lives creating equal, but alternative (lived) citizenship. However, he notes this is a reaction to negative state policies rather than an inclusive form of citizenship.

It may be more appropriate to highlight that the topographies and topologies of formal and lived youth citizenship are not mutually exclusive (Häkli and Kallio, 2014; Staeheli *et al.*, 2013). The remainder of this paper explores ideas facilitating street youth engagement in citizenship practices through creating knowledge of formal topographies and adapting this to informal street topologies.

The research and knowledge exchange project: an informal site of citizenship

Growing up on the streets, a participatory qualitative longitudinal three-year research project, explored the lives of street young people in African cities: Accra, Ghana; Bukavu, DRCongo; and Harare, Zimbabwe. Employing a 'capability approach' (Sen, 1999), the research sought to go beyond the manifestations of poverty and street life to investigate the freedoms young people have to create daily life and demonstrate resilience in dealing with day-to-day problems.

The research was constructed around a core group of 198 street youth aged 14–21 (at the start of the three years and ageing to 17-24) to understand the choices and constraints affecting them as they become adults (van Blerk *et al.*, 2017). Using ethnographic methods, data was collected through weekly reports from 18 young researchers (six in each city), who took part in two phases of ethnographic research and knowledge exchange training. The young researchers were all living on the streets and had expressed interest in skills training and involvement as

researchers in the project. The young researchers reported on the experience of their own lives and those of ten additional street youth in their social network. These 'diarised' accounts were supplemented by 12 thematic focus groups investigating key issues of life on the streets and involving all participants. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of xxxx, drawing on international guidelines for research with (street) youth (see Alderson and Morrow, 2011). Data collection was undertaken in conjunction with NGO partners and utilised existing child protection policies and contextualised practices of working with street youth. Informed consent was obtained from participants and reinforced through discussion of shared responsibilities to maintain confidentiality and participant anonymity.

Growing up on the streets aimed to support street youth to recognise the value of their own experiences, to know the importance of their position as experts and to develop in their role as spokespeople for themselves and their peers. Through developing skills to collate this collective experience and share it with stakeholders, the aim was for street youth to be more directly involved in shaping the decisions that affect their lives. Unlike dilemmas discussed in engaged anthropology, where activist research can replicate colonial relations of power (Low and Merry, 2010); this process emerged from the young researchers themselves. The research and knowledge exchange had fostered a sense of alternative 'street citizenship' among the young researchers.

Street citizenship emerging through research and knowledge exchange

If excluded from the formal topography of state citizenship, street youth are still actively engaged in citizenship acts and values, but in the form of an alternative 'street citizenship'. Created within their unique topology of informal spaces, communities and social structures, street citizenship embodies a sense of recognition, belonging and support amongst each other. In exploring this concept of street citizenship, Staeheli *et al.*'s (2013) notion of activist citizenship is adapted and developed.

Violence and discrimination are normal experiences for young people on the streets in each of the research cities. Their lack of identity documents, appearance and general need to 'hustle' for work, sleep in the open, or scavenge for food, means they are rarely viewed as legitimate 'citizens'. Statements such as 'people don't regard us' (Accra FGD 4) or 'they laugh and insult us by saying nasty things' (Bukavu FGD 2) are commonplace, but more evident is the connection between insults and citizenship status with young people told they are 'not part of the human race' (Accra FGD 5) and that people are 'nauseated by us' (Harare FGD 3). Under these conditions street youth are not protected by the police and suffer from major injustices on a daily basis. Generally young people are seen as a threat to public order on the streets: a group to be policed rather than protected, perceived as disrupting the social order of the city, unable to participate more fully due to their age, status, lack of education, or gender.

Lacking identity documents, they are unable to obtain employment and so engage in unlicensed work, such as car washing, sex work or street vending. They sleep in public spaces, typically market stalls, parks, bars, or in informal settlements. Thus, by inhabiting public spaces and bypassing formal state-condoned work, street youth come into conflict with the authorities who

frequently harass them, steal or confiscate their possessions and disrupt their means of earning money; as Nixon and Didier point out:

"*Now the police are coming to harass us… we are trying to sell CDs in order to get out of the streets and they are coming to take that money"* (Nixon, Harare 2013)

"When the Mayor arrives with police in the area, if he finds that certain members of the group washing cars, he orders the police to take away the number plates of these cars that are being washed. We beg the Mayor, telling him that our life depends on the washing of cars. He never pities us." (Didier, Bukavu, 2013)

Street youth are sometimes specifically targeted for violent harassment by the police and other public authorities for the purposes of policing or political agenda. In Accra, the city authorities, harass young people as a process of removal from the streets. The state enactment of violence and its passive condonement by surrounding non-state actors (market stall holders, for example) further underlines the marginalisation and exclusion of street youth and their status as 'non-citizens':

"The police harass us at night, beat us and then flee, taking our money. They have come four times this week." (Didier, Bukavu, 2013)

"Our appearance and dressing causes us to be caught by police." (Taurai, Harare, 2013)

In addition to the role played by police and city authorities in the violence carried out against street youth, their rights are not respected in situations where injustice takes place.

"They are not serious with cases from our neighbourhood. He beat me and I went to the hospital but they have still not arrested him. So, over there, we are worthless. Someone can kill you freely." (Josephine, Accra, 2012)

Despite their marginalisation and exclusion in the city, street youth have gained many capabilities and skills on the street that facilitate their pursuit of everyday survival and make them expert communicators, negotiators and supporters of each other. Therefore, although denied citizenship rights in their cities; they do display multiple aspects of citizenship and foster a common sense of belonging. Others have written about solidarity and family or community-like groups developing on the streets among young people (Aptekar and Stoecklin, 2014). However, here, active 'street citizenship' was identified within their groups but was also able to move beyond street communities to a form of activist citizenship within their cities, directly influencing the wider community.

The research and knowledge exchange facilitation process was not designed to 'teach' young people new skills – those they already possessed; but rather to explore engagement with stakeholders so their voices could be heard and to feel comfortable in discussions in unfamiliar contexts and formats. Entry into such spaces can be intimidating; while the thought of talking to people whom they resent for not supporting them can make some want to react angrily.

Estelle and Josephine both highlight that they first thought of responding in this way but through collective discussion realised they need to approach stakeholders differently.

"At first I was afraid…. I was very nervous." (Estelle, Bukavu, 2014)

"I had planned to lash those people in authority who have treated me badly with words of insult. 'You this person, when I was pregnant you beat me and I started bleeding…' I would have said something that will make the person feel very bad." (Josephine, Accra 2014)

Creating an empowering space for street youth to feel confident to talk to stakeholders, a series of workshops were developed to facilitate young researchers to formulate what they wanted to say and to engage in meaningful discussion about their lives in an open and non-confrontational manner.

Following the workshops, the young people commented on how participation had helped them to recognise their own abilities and expert knowledge, and feel confident in sharing their ideas. The benefit of working together, advising each other and practicing talking and discussing with stakeholders enabled street youth in all three cities to feel confident that they had something valuable to contribute as equal participants in discussions with stakeholders, even if it did not actually change their status.

"The training gave me confidence to talk to them…. [because of the training and workshops] they respect me, and treat me differently; because they see me at a different level than if they just assumed that I had no money." (Goodwill, Harare, 2015)

"The training helped me to stand in front of people: the way to stand and look and how to organise my ideas. But we were the ones who gave ourselves – the training helped with our delivery but the content came entirely from ourselves." (Estelle, Bukavu, 2015)

Going beyond a form of active citizenship that emerges in traditional notions of citizenship education, where young people learn to become particular types of 'good' citizens, in this instance the young researchers contested the notion of 'good' citizens as compliant and upholding a particular geopolitical agenda, to argue for their own rights to be acknowledged in their cities. In some ways the research and knowledge exchange process still employed traditional citizenship 'learning' structures for producing model citizens; discussing how to talk to stakeholders, how to present opinions and the correct way to dress, behave and act. Yet, the training workshops were a space through which lived street citizenship ideas could be expressed acting as a bridge between forms of citizenship: participants 'learning' to adapt to the formal citizenship of stakeholders in order to express themselves effectively as street citizens. Through the workshops the young researchers felt empowered to engage in discussion with the state and civil society in activist street citizenship in an attempt to disrupt the current model of social order and the position of street youth as non-citizens.

Engaging with stakeholders

A series of meetings were then held in each of the three cities to create an opportunity for the young researchers to talk with state and civil society. These comprised a frontline workers meeting and a policymakers meeting in each city, and a peer network meeting in Harare with representatives from NGOs working across the continent. Casting all fears aside, the young people felt positive about engagement where they could share their experiences and be listened to. A sense of purpose and possibility for change was created, with the onus now on stakeholders to use that information to improve young people's lives on the street.

"That day I will never forget in my life. I came from the street and I was meeting people from different organisations and NGOs to sit with them and share my story." (Eric, Accra, 2015)

"People came up to me and said that they have changed the way they thought about street children in a positive way, so I think they will do something." (Jonathan, Accra, 2015)

"It's too soon to tell how they will respond; some previously did not know about street children's problems and now they have the knowledge it's up to them." (Goodwill, Harare, 2015)

"They were appreciative of what I said, but now it's up to them." (Taurai, Harare, 2015)

Young people felt that they were in a good position to challenge the views of adults and respond to incorrect assumptions about street youth or life on the street. Through this they were able to demonstrate their capabilities and inform stakeholders as activists for change in the way young people are treated on the streets. While challenging street youth's realities in each city is making slow progress, there was clear evidence that activist street citizenship expressed in training had a beneficial impact in engagement events.

"During the group work it was very easy; we were like teachers… When they say something I tell them 'no…' I gave them more explanation [on the issue] and they understood it. So they realised that what they were saying is not real." (Papa, Accra, 2015).

In all cities it was quickly evident that professionals and governments do not always consider their programmes or actions from young people's perspectives. When confronted with the realities of street life, there was some acknowledgement that policy is based on assumptions rather than realities and requires change.

"To hear the [young people] talking about their lives… was WOW! It was the most rewarding experience in my life. It was so emotional to hear their stories. Really tough. I think I cried. I was reminded that even if I am a street worker, I am a human being first and the words can be tough to hear… Although it was challenging to listen to, it was so impressive that they were comfortable and confident sharing their stories." (African Peer Network Member, 2015)

"They regard us as nothing but when we hit on it… you see the leader of Social Welfare; he got up and said they are sorry because they didn't know. He said personally he wasn't aware of that; so he admitted his mistakes." (Sarah, Accra, 2015).

"They came to understand that being on the street doesn't mean we are armed robbers or we fight just anyhow; we explained to them and they understood us better that we have been helping one another." (Constance, Accra, 2015).

Benefits to daily life

In the paper so far, street citizenship has been explored as a local process of activism within a formal set up, but beyond the workshops and engagement events the young researchers expressed lived street citizenship on a daily basis. Participants felt that applying their communication skills in practical settings also benefitted their daily lives. For many, the opportunity to discuss and think about their interactions with others has helped them to act as spokespeople for other young people: displaying activist street citizenship in their communities. Where previously limited education had made many feel unable to talk to police or area guards, street youth have used their new confidence to negotiate with those they are in conflict with.

"The advice also helped us to understand how you can talk with your age mates and someone who is older than you" (Jonathan, Accra, 2015)

"This training helped me to be able to talk in public, not only to this category of person [NGO stakeholders] but to any person." (Didier, Bukavu, 2015).

"I have my friends and some elders around my area; if maybe we are in need of something I can go to the assembly man and discuss it with him. I can discuss with him about the refuse site and place of convenience; I can let him know some of the things that will help us when it should be done. I can discuss with him [that] if we clean the place, then issues with malaria and other things will be out of the place." (Constance, Accra, 2015)

However, the research and knowledge exchange process also facilitated engagement in street citizenship beyond city or nation-state boundaries, suggesting an alternative form of citizenship as belonging to wider street communities. When the young researchers were brought together from across the three cities, their activism was expressed at a new scale. In the informal time together, they explored the potential to campaign for citizenship rights for young people across their communities through establishing online networks that enabled them to discuss and support each other. It is possible to acknowledge street citizenship as a nuanced form of lived citizenship that goes beyond state boundaries across Africa. The potential global nature of street citizenship requires further examination through research across other continents.

A nuanced approach to lived street citizenship

In considering how street youth engage in citizenship acts through research and knowledge exchange, it is apparent that the practices and benefits to daily life augment understandings of citizenship for marginalised groups. Throughout this paper, the literature demonstrates that citizenship is a fluid concept that is full of contestation (Buire and Staeheli 2017). Socio-spatial relations, at various scales and within and outside of formal boundaries results in opportunities for young people to engage in citizenship that can be state-induced, radical and activist at the

same time (Kallio et al, 2015). In this discussion formal and lived citizenship are enmeshed as aspects of young people's engagement in citizenship enhancing participation in political processes. However, as this paper has demonstrated, street youth are further marginalised in discussions of youth citizenship. Living life on the margins, outside of educational or other institutional frameworks and often employing livelihood and survival strategies that contradict what the state determines as legal; lived street citizenship directly challenges any form of collective politics outside of street life. Unlike examples where youth challenge the state resulting in inclusionary citizenship from below (Kabeer, 2005); street citizenship is insurgent (Ugor, 2013) but lacks the location-specific critical mass of effective student protests or other youth occupations.

Therefore, the paper suggests a nuanced lived 'street citizenship'. This is one which is active and activist (Buire and Staeheli, 2017; Staeheli *et al.* 2013) but also where (street) culturally embedded citizenship is appropriated. Street citizenship does not directly depart from formal structures of political and civic engagement but rather suggests that rights for marginalised groups need to work *with* state actors to be successful. As Boudreau *et al.* (2015) noted, risk for youth engaged in alternative lifestyles is significantly reduced where they understand and choose to work within legal and state structures, enabling acts of lived citizenship to be created without arrest. Here, being polite to police and knowing how to 'not get caught in the act of graffiti' was important. For street youth, knowing their rights and stories was not enough. They also needed to know how to engage state actors in processes of discussion and how to make their point heard. This required learning new practices – not how to be 'good' citizens that follow legal rules and conventions, but how to work and communicate with formal state actors. Therefore, street citizenship for youth is better attained through knowledge of sites and actors they need to engage rather than through a pedagogy of citizenship (Buire and Staeheli 2017). This suggests their 'street citizenship' sits in between models of formal state citizenship achieved through education and learning and alternative activist models where youth engage on their own terms. Street citizenship is part of street culture: it does not bend to the 'rules' of society but works within knowledge of those parameters to enhance the daily life experiences of young people on the streets.

Conclusion

This paper has identified that street citizenship is not necessarily something that needs to be learnt or taught through formal educational structures but is part of street life and can be facilitated through informal processes and topologies and over informal topographies (Häkli and Kallio, 2014). Street youth, disenfranchised from state and educational citizenship processes, do in fact create an alternative lived citizenship on the street that emerges through their marginalisation in the city. Although an active form of citizenship within their own street communities, street citizenship is often in conflict with notions of a 'good' citizen as expressed through political structures. However, when engagement between these spaces and actors is facilitated, street youth move towards demonstrating activist citizenship (Staeheli, *et al.*, 2013) that seeks to disrupt and challenge contemporary thinking and perceptions. Citizenship for street youth is developed through their marginalisation and exclusion from formal state

citizenship, as an alternative form of lived street citizenship that contests, shift and changes fixed understandings of being a 'good' citizen.

Lived street citizenship is not only active and sometimes activist, but the topography is developed at various scales within local communities, at city and nation-state but also beyond such boundaries with the potential to challenge understandings of poverty and marginalisation in childhood on a broader scale. Civil society has a role to play here both in fostering true engagement between street youth, and other marginalised groups of young people, and governments, policy-makers and donors within the boundaries of nation-states but also to foster engagement with young people on a global scale.

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